

Universitetspladsen

# RUglobal

Information and debate from Roskilde University

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# “To make schools inclusive, we should focus on children’s situation”



Maja Røn Larsen

We want a school system that is more inclusive and that can accommodate more pupils with special needs than is the case today. This is the message from the Danish parliament and many Danish local authorities. But if the school system is to be more inclusive, we have to address the environment that the children form part of. This is the assessment of PhD Maja Røn Larsen from RU who has conducted research in the area during the past three years.

By: *Eva Lykke Jørgensen, RUGlobal*

“If we are to work with inclusion, we must work with the children’s environments. We must address the context that the children are to form part of. We should not just work with the individual child,” PhD Maja Røn Larsen says.

But there is an obstacle in that you cannot just focus on the environment the children form part of. In order to get resources to work with children with learning difficulties, you have to identify a specific child. Very often, this is a prerequisite for receiving additional funds - for example for remedial teachers.

“And once you have established that a specific child has special needs, you have diverted your attention from the main context. Then the issue is whether there is something wrong with that particular child. And somehow that limits the efforts,” Maja Røn Larsen says.

“The legislation in primary and lower secondary education and especially in the area of special schools makes it necessary to identify

the individual child in order to receive support,” the PhD researcher points out.

## More flexible support options

Maja Røn Larsen has some suggestions as to how you could create a better environment for children with special needs in the Danish school system.

“You could set up more flexible support options, that is more support options targeting the internal school environment instead of targeting the non-school environment. A lot of possibilities available lie outside the ordinary school class. These consist of special action involving taking the child out of the class, and you could argue that if the difficulties, in fact, concern the sense of community in the class, then you have prevented yourself from addressing it if you remove the child from the class,” Maja Røn Larsen explains.

## The most surprising findings

For three years, Maja Røn Larsen has researched this area, and several of her findings have surprised her.

“It is interesting to what extent all parties (ed. psychologists, teachers, educators and administrators) are completely absorbed with making the inclusion successful,” she says and continues:

“And in this connection, the most surprising thing is how the intentions can still easily be derailed. This is evident because as we are talking more and more about inclusion we are at the same time excluding more and more children. There are some institutional restrictions in the organisation making it very difficult to work with inclusion,” she explains.

“Also, it has surprised me how discussions about inclusion are always about the professionals not knowing enough. My work shows that it is less about a lack of skills and good intentions than about the way in which we have organised the entire system, including the general separation of the special and the normal,” Maja Røn Larsen concludes.

# My job is to listen to you

Helle Lykkeberg Laursen. That's her name, the student counsellor for the Danish programme. She is attentive and a good listener, and she chooses her words carefully. She is the kind of girl that you automatically feel like talking to. RUGlobal met Helle at Café Klimt in Nørrebro where she described life as a student counsellor.

By Eva Lykke Jørgensen, RUGlobal

Helle has been a student counsellor for the Danish programme for the past 18 months so she already has some experience in counselling her fellow students of Danish. While stirring her coffee on the small table, she recounts the situations surprising her the most as a student counsellor.

"When you sit opposite a person in our office and listen to his or her story, it's strange how intimate the atmosphere can suddenly be-

"That's when students have very complicated backgrounds. They may fall under old programme regulations and have taken courses from a different university, and then you must try to put together the pieces of the puzzle to discover what it will mean to their future"

come. Sometimes, people open up completely. I think situations like that produce very good talks, also when people are not afraid of taking up my time," she says.

The students sometimes seem almost apologetic when they have questions. However, Helle tries to make them understand that it is her job to counsel them.

"My job is to listen to you, so do feel free to take up my time." It is nice when people use the Student Guidance Office, Helle remarks. She also has stories to tell about episodes

posing great challenges to her as a student counsellor.

"When you sit opposite a person, and you sense that he or she has some issues that perhaps go a little deeper, the conversation can take on an existential tone. That's when sometimes, I find it hard to see where to draw the line and refer them to someone else, because while they may be asking about something specific, you still sense that the real issue is something entirely different," she says thoughtfully.

## Exploring Danish

Helle Lykkeberg Laursen gets questions from people wanting to join RU as well as lots of e-mails from students of Danish asking about their study programme and the courses to elect and not elect within the framework of the field of study. The numerous and diverse questions make it necessary for Helle to constantly keep herself updated on applicable rules within the framework of the subject of Danish.



"I'm myself a student at Danish, and I'm used to being considered a fellow student. But quite often, new students first and foremost see me as a counsellor. I have experienced people coming up to me at parties and asking me questions relating to student guidance," says Helle Lykkeberg.

“It has been very interesting to discover all the options available for students. When you familiarise yourself with the rules and find out about the options available. Getting that knowledge has been a good experience. There are many other paths to follow than just keeping to the beaten track,” she says and mentions the courses in Norway and Sweden, which is one of the options overlooked by many students of Danish.

There may also be questions from students that are really difficult to answer.

“That’s when students have very complicated backgrounds. They may fall under old programme regulations and have taken courses from a different university, and then you must try to put together the pieces of the puzzle to discover what it will mean to their future,” Helle explains. In many cases, all she can do is present the options to the students, but eventually they will have to choose themselves, she stresses.

“Often, they have questions that I really can’t answer for them. I can provide them with some options, but I can’t provide them with any answers.” “In such cases, it’s up to them to find out what they want to do,” Helle says.

### Positive response

When students come to the Student Guidance Office, they are often faced with a situation requiring decisions to be made.

“Very often, I never find out what they choose, and of course I occasionally wonder about the path this or that student decided to take, and I also think about whether talking to me was helpful to them. So it’s nice when I receive positive feedback,” Helle says.

Helle would like to continue working as a Student Counsellor until she graduates from RU next summer. But she could also see herself in a counselling role in the future, she says.

“Perhaps not full-time, because I think there is a tad too many rules and things you have to remember, but if I get a job as an upper secondary school teacher, I would like to work as a student counsellor on the side. I could easily do that,” the student counsellor says. She is generally very happy about her job:

“Sometimes, studying becomes very abstract - especially while you are working on your dissertation. But I really enjoy the tangibility of this job. I think it’s nice to come to work and answer e-mails and produce things,” Helle concludes.

Around us, there is chit-chat at Café Klimt. No stress or hustle and bustle although we are in mid-December. Helle and I finish our coffees and go our separate ways.

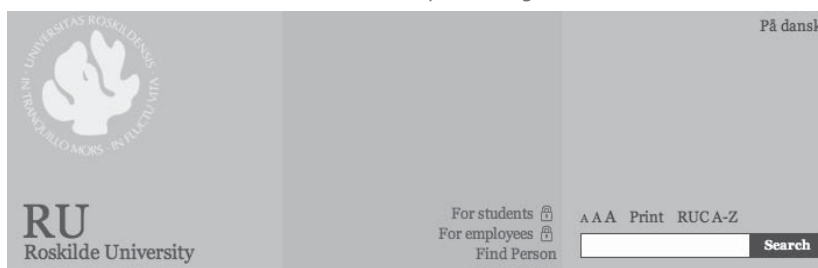
### Helle’s tasks

- Helle spends a lot of time answering e-mails. A lot of people write to her, but some also seek advice by telephone.
- She attends meetings of the Study Board once a month, and she participates in student counsellor days with her colleagues.
- Then there is semester planning where she works together with the student representatives of the Danish programme. At the moment, they are planning a Karen Blixen Theme for the coming semester during which the lecturers will hold a seminar, food and drinks will be served followed by a visit to the Karen Blixen Museum.
- When Helle started out as a student counsellor, she tried to organise some cottage trips involving more academic content than the ones at Basic Studies.
- Finally, there are open house events and dissertation start-up meetings where future dissertation students meet to find out whether they want to write their dissertations together.
- Helle shares an office with Rune, the student counsellor for the History programme, and they assist each other in their work as student counsellors.
- In addition to Danish, Helle also studies Philosophy.
- Helle Lykkeberg Laursen’s contact information: dansk-studievejledningen.dk and tel.+45 46743006

### Conditions for use of the mailing lists

RU’s mailing lists must be used with consideration. It is not allowed to send a mail to all students or employees by using the existing subject specific mailing lists or the staff mailing lists, see:

[www.ruc.dk/en/postlisteregler](http://www.ruc.dk/en/postlisteregler)



Frontpage > About the University > Organisation > Administration > Campus-it > Guides > Use of the mailing lists

### Conditions for use of the mailing lists

The mailing lists have been established to ensure that the various organisational units, institutes, research groups and groups of students can communicate in an easy way. In addition to the general rules for the use of the IT-systems at RU, the following conditions also apply to the use of mailing lists:

- > The mailing lists should be used with care. They are under no circumstances to be used for private or commercial purposes. For advertisements of a private nature, the mailing list [markedsplads\(at\)ruc.dk](mailto:markedsplads(at)ruc.dk) should be used. Mails regarding job advertisements can be sent to [ruc\(at\)moment.dk](mailto:ruc(at)moment.dk) and will then be published on RU's Jobbank (in Danish).
- > A mail sent to a list of a specific subject should contain 'relevant information' for those who receive it. Mails containing irrelevant information are viewed as unsolicited electronic mail, also known as SPAM mail. It is a good rule of thumb to only write to the lists you yourself are signed up for, and always to consider the relevance of the mail before pressing Send. If in doubt, contact [helpdesk\(at\)ruc.dk](mailto:helpdesk(at)ruc.dk).
- > It is not allowed to send a mail to many or all students or employees by using the existing subject specific mailing lists or the staff mailing lists. In this case, you should use the weekly newsletter, see [here](#).
- > Some lists are closed, i.e. you can't subscribe to them unless you contact the list owner or administrator. You can subscribe to open lists using the [Subscribe/Unsubscribe page](#).
- > The Helpdesk Secretariat reserves the right, in the event that the regulations are not complied with, to terminate the spammer's access to the Mailing lists system.

Tips and tricks from Campus-it

# The dream weaver's five commandments



Mikkel Wendelboe

The festive season is over. We've finished the Christmas dates long ago, and the neighbour's ruptured mailbox is laying on the ground, still smouldering after the prank someone played on him. A new year is looming on the horizon, and along with it a wealth of good opportunities to wipe the slate clean. Opportunities to become a better person, to make new discoveries and to perhaps actually prepare for a lecture. The good resolutions know no boundaries, and the fake promises can almost be plucked right out of the air when New Year-playful RU students tie their shoelaces and shuffle off to university. "I promise to lose weight" – is common with most people, but this sincere intention usually only lasts until the first visit to the canteen. Until now...

*Text and photo: Mikkel Wendelboe, RUGlobal*

Triglycerides – the enslavers of the modern world.

A group of compounds that are nearly as defining of life in the western world as oxygen and water. Composed of an alcohol and bonded together by three fatty acids, the triglycerides, or fats, enslave, blind and curse the lives of myriads of people. Whether they protrude over the belt, try to lure us behind the greasy windows of burger bars or thrive freely in the meat on the cow in the field, the fats and the obesity they cause have become the largest millstone round our necks.

And they thrive between Christmas and New Year's Eve. At least that is the way I see it as I cheerfully take a bite of my apple. I try to ignore the fact that I actually wish it was a French hotdog. "A column with a few words of advice about how to lose weight". I taste the words. It is going to sound very solemn and 'holier-than-thou', but my intentions are pure so I hope I'll manage. That, if anything,

is surely the sporting spirit. At the same time, I can almost feel the halo over my head, but I angrily blow it away.

You see, I am not writing in the capacity of some kind of obesity Inquisition: No finger-wagging, just a piece of friendly advice, because I hate eating healthy myself and powering ahead afterwards on the sunken road in a pair

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"And if you must have a soft drink, make it a Dr. Pepper with cucumber flavour. Surely, that will rid you of the urge"

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of used-up trainers. Still somehow, magically and undramatically, I have succeeded in ridding my puritan body of 55 kilos of "lard" in just one year.

Do I hear scattered laughter and jeers? "Pre-tentious!", the opponents jeer, but I dismiss

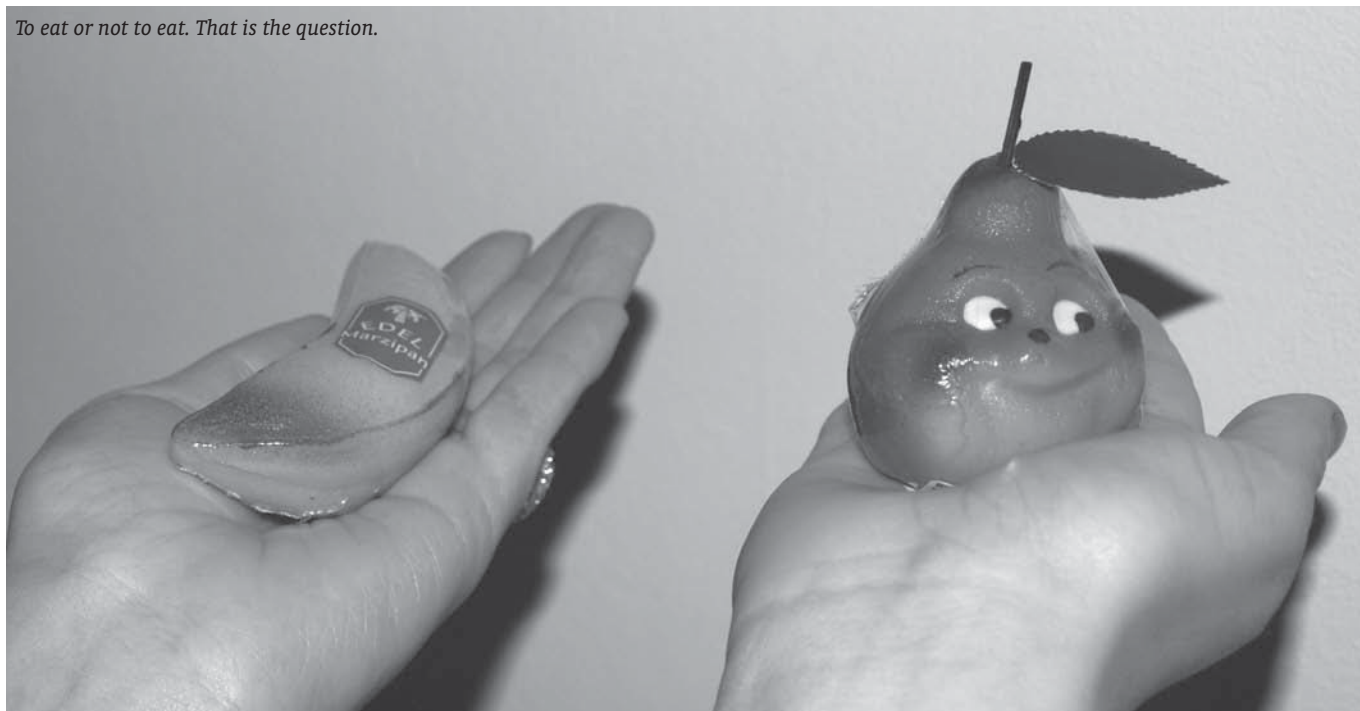
the criticism. I am here to offer assistance to those who want it. Assistance in keeping new year's resolutions and trying to get a slim waist. Amen.

The quill driver sucks his quill pen and puts on his thinking cap. Because how should such a well-intentioned quick guide be designed? "On a positive note!", the writer mumbles, "of course" and his full head of dark-brown chevelure is being tossed around. "And of course in a funny tone," he continues and jumps up. The heels patter on the floor while he eagerly walks up and down his chamber. "It is logical, of course, it is your trademark," his mouth mumbles at the same time as the body parts go into sync.

A help line takes shape:

1. **Eliminate one unhealthy item from each meal.** This may sound logical, but still warrants reconsideration by everyone. Skip the butter on the bread, the coke with the hotdog and the extra cheese

To eat or not to eat. That is the question.



- on your Big Mac. (Perhaps you should just give up eating hotdogs altogether?)
2. **Wholegrain is the new black.** There isn't the product that doesn't come with a touch of the magical wholegrain. Crispbread, pasta, biscuits and bread. Wholegrain purifies the soul, trims the belly skin and does not taste at all bad. Wholegrain beer? A possibility. I'll check into it.
  3. **Size matters.** Or rather, quantity! Good food is good, and I dare say you can enjoy your favourite hachis without having to run to church and confess. As long as you do it with moderation. (Could be combined with advice no. 1. Who said inter-disciplinarity?)
  4. **Cut down on the soft drinks.** You don't need them, and although your brain is whining and telling you otherwise, resist

taught us that (apply your own source reference here). So the more you sweat the more weight you'll lose. Running may, however, seem trivial to many people, so find something that pleases you and enhances your motivation. Whether it is volleyball, lacrosse or wife-carrying races.

However, RUSIS can undoubtedly help you with no. 5 and make nos. 1-4 more tolerable. So now, there is no excuse not to get started. The sports dream weaver is already looking forward to seeing footprints of trainers all over campus. A campus where no one feels they are in bad shape, and where we

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"Wholegrain purifies the soul, trims the belly skin and does not taste at all bad. Wholegrain beer? A possibility"

---

them. Take a walk, eat beech leaves or write an essay when the urge is there. Cutting out soft drinks will take several kilos off your ribs over a year. And if you must have a soft drink, make it a Dr. Pepper with cucumber flavour. Surely, that will rid you of the urge.

5. **Exercise! Any which way you can.** You lose weight as soon as you consume less calories than you burn. Science has

might actually put together a few more sports teams? I am counting on you.

Happy New Year.

*Well begun is half done. Run to meet the new year on healthy legs.*

